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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 006652

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [MX](#)
SUBJECT: OAXACA CRISIS WORSENS DAYS BEFORE FELIPE CALDERON
ASSUMES PRESIDENCY

REF: A. MEXICO 6182
[1](#)B. MEXICO 5771
[1](#)C. MEXICO 5567

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR CHARLES BARCLAY, REASON S: 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Begin summary: The political crisis in Oaxaca worsened over the weekend of November 25 when provocateurs turned what started out as a peaceful protest led by the People's Popular Assembly of Oaxaca (APPO) into a violent confrontation with the Federal Preventive Police (PFP). By the morning of November 26, there were reports that 34 buildings, including a handful of federal and state offices, were damaged by fire during the night, up to 160 protesters had been detained, and between 50 and 150 people had been injured. There were no indications that any Americans were harmed and the U.S. consular agent's office was unaffected. Although fighting ceased on Sunday and the city seemed eerily calm, the situation in Oaxaca remained tense with additional protests scheduled creating the possibility for further confrontation with authorities. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The PFP responded to attacks November 25 against its security corridor placed for weeks around Oaxaca City's historic central square, the Zocalo, by firing tear gas on protesters and by nightfall took control of the APPO's main encampment in the nearby Plaza Santo Domingo. That night there were reports that APPO had set its own encampments ablaze and that a number of buildings and cars in and around the historic center were burning. On November 26, press reports and our consular agent indicated that the violence had stopped, over 100 protesters had been detained through the night, and at least 50 people had been wounded (Note: the APPO reported without confirmation that over 100 people were hurt and three people killed). Among the buildings at least partially burned were those belonging to the federal Supreme Court, regional office of the Secretariat of External Relations (SRE), the state Supreme Court, Juarez Theater (the former legislative building), state tourism office, and Camino Real hotel. The APPO denied responsibility for the burning of federal buildings.

[1](#)3. (SBU) State police reportedly used helicopters to transport some of the demonstrators to state prisons. Family members and representatives of human rights organizations said they were denied access to the detained. The GOM indicated November 27 that 141 people, including 107 men and 34 women, had been transferred to a federal prison.

¶4. (SBU) On November 26, APPO council members met in a closed session to discuss the previous night's violence and consider their next steps. They released a document restating demands that Governor Ruiz step down and the PFP withdraw. The APPO also announced that it would try to re-take Plaza Santo Domingo on November 27 and mobilize around the state with the intention of taking control of state delegation offices and blocking highways (Note: this demonstration was subsequently postponed. End note).

¶5. (SBU) During the November 25 protest, APPO members intended to create a human corridor surrounding the PFP in the Zocalo for 48 hours with the goal of pressuring the GOM to force the governor out of office. This protest happened days after Ulises Ruiz announced that the conflict was "over," a claim the federal government was quick to counter. Few teachers were involved in Saturday's demonstrations, even though the teachers were the originators of the Oaxaca protests six months ago. Many have begun returning to class.

¶6. (C) Comment: It is not clear who was responsible for initiating the violence on November 25, although second-hand accounts suggest that both radical elements of the APPO as well as armed gunmen loyal to the governor were involved. Both sides--the leftist protesters and rightist PRI supporters--have an interest in pressuring the federal government to resolve the conflict in Oaxaca, with both hoping the GOM will intervene in their favor. With the inauguration of President-elect Calderon on December 1, the Fox administration will almost certainly continue to wait for the transition so it does not have to act further in Oaxaca. Once he assumes office, Calderon can be expected to try to work with the PRI to replace Ruiz quickly via the Senate and

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crack down on radical elements in Oaxaca if they continue to foment unrest. In a private meeting with the Ambassador on November 27, Senate President and PRI Coordinator Manlio Fabio Beltrones suggested that once Calderon takes over another office should be found for Ruiz, opening the door for a new PRI governor in Oaxaca and probable end to the conflict.

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